

NEWS RELEASE

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Idaho's March Unemployment Rate Down Slightly to 2.6 Percent

Idaho's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March was 2.6 percent, down slightly from February.

Idaho's economy was strong during the reference week of March 12, before the COVID-19 pandemic began to affect the state. An additional 1,550 people made themselves available for work in March, pushing Idaho's seasonally adjusted labor force up to 893,211. The number of unemployed decreased by 892 to 22,947. Total employment grew by 2,442 to 870,264.

March's labor force participation rate – the percentage of people 16 years and older with jobs or looking for work – remained unchanged from February at 64.2 percent.

Over the year, March's statewide labor force was up 18,604 (2.1 percent), employment was up 21,453 (2.5 percent) and there were 2,849 (-11 percent) fewer unemployed persons. Seasonally-adjusted nonfarm jobs were up 2.4 percent from March 2019, representing a gain of 18,100 jobs. Construction (+6.8 percent), professional and business services (+5.4 percent) and other services (+3.8 percent) showed the largest percentage gains while manufacturing was the only industry experiencing an over-the-year decrease, totalling 800 jobs.

Idaho nonfarm jobs decreased by 1,000 (0.1 percent) from February to March for a total of 770,800. Five of Idaho's 11 industry sectors fell short of seasonal expectations. The largest over-the-month decreases for March were leisure and hospitality (-1.2 percent), information (-1.1 percent) and education and health services (-0.7 percent). The construction, financial activities and trade, transportation, and utilities industries exceeded seasonal expectations, adding a combined total of 1,100 jobs. Total jobs in natural resources, manufacturing and government remained unchanged from February.

Three of Idaho's five Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) experienced nonfarm job declines from February to March 2020 with Lewiston having the fastest rate of decline at 1.0 percent. The Coeur d'Alene and Idaho Falls MSAs each saw modest over-the-month job gains of 0.3 percent. Over the year, all five MSAs experienced job growth rates of 1.1 percent or higher. The Idaho Falls MSA continued to see the fastest over-the-year growth rate in the state at 3.9 percent.

Annually, unemployment insurance benefit payments for the week of March 12 were down 6.95 percent from a weekly average of \$2,362,800 a year ago to \$2,198,600 weekly for March 2020. The number of claimants decreased by 9.1 percent to 6,497 from a weekly average of 7,147 a year ago. COVID-19 related layoffs had not yet impacted claims activity during the week of March 12.

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Nationally, unemployment was up almost a full percentage point at 4.4 percent in March, as the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic began to show in national labor statistics. Total unemployed increased by 1.4 million from February for a total of 7.1 million people looking for work. One year earlier, the national unemployment rate was 3.8 percent, and the number of unemployed was about 6.2 million. [<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.nr0.htm>]

Labor force data for Idaho's counties and cities can be found at <https://lmi.idaho.gov/laus>.

For details on Idaho's labor market, visit lmi.idaho.gov.

Seasonally Adjusted Data	3/20	2/20	3/19
Civilian Labor Force	893,211	891,661	874,607
Unemployment	22,947	23,839	25,796
% Labor Force Unemployed	2.6	2.7	2.9
Total Employment	870,264	867,822	848,811

Unadjusted Forecast Data			
Civilian Labor Force	892,318	891,314	870,361
Unemployment	25,820	27,457	30,707
% Labor Force Unemployed	2.9	3.1	3.5
Total Employment	866,498	863,857	839,654

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Editor's Note: This report provides estimates of the employment situation in Idaho prior to the current impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).